



THE PROPOSED LINCOLN MEMORIAL

BY LEILA MECHLIN

INCLUDING PICTURES OF A DESIGN BY HENRY BACON FOR A BUILDING ON THE SITE
RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS, IN POTOMAC PARK

AT last a great national memorial is to be erected at Washington to commemorate the life and character of Abraham Lincoln. For this memorial, Congress has authorized an expenditure of two million dollars, the largest amount ever appropriated for a similar purpose, and there is reason to believe that when it is completed it will satisfy not only the popular ideal, which demands grandeur and beauty, but also the more instructed taste of those who require of such a memorial peculiar fitness and who realize the obligation to make it in every respect worthy alike of the nation and the man.

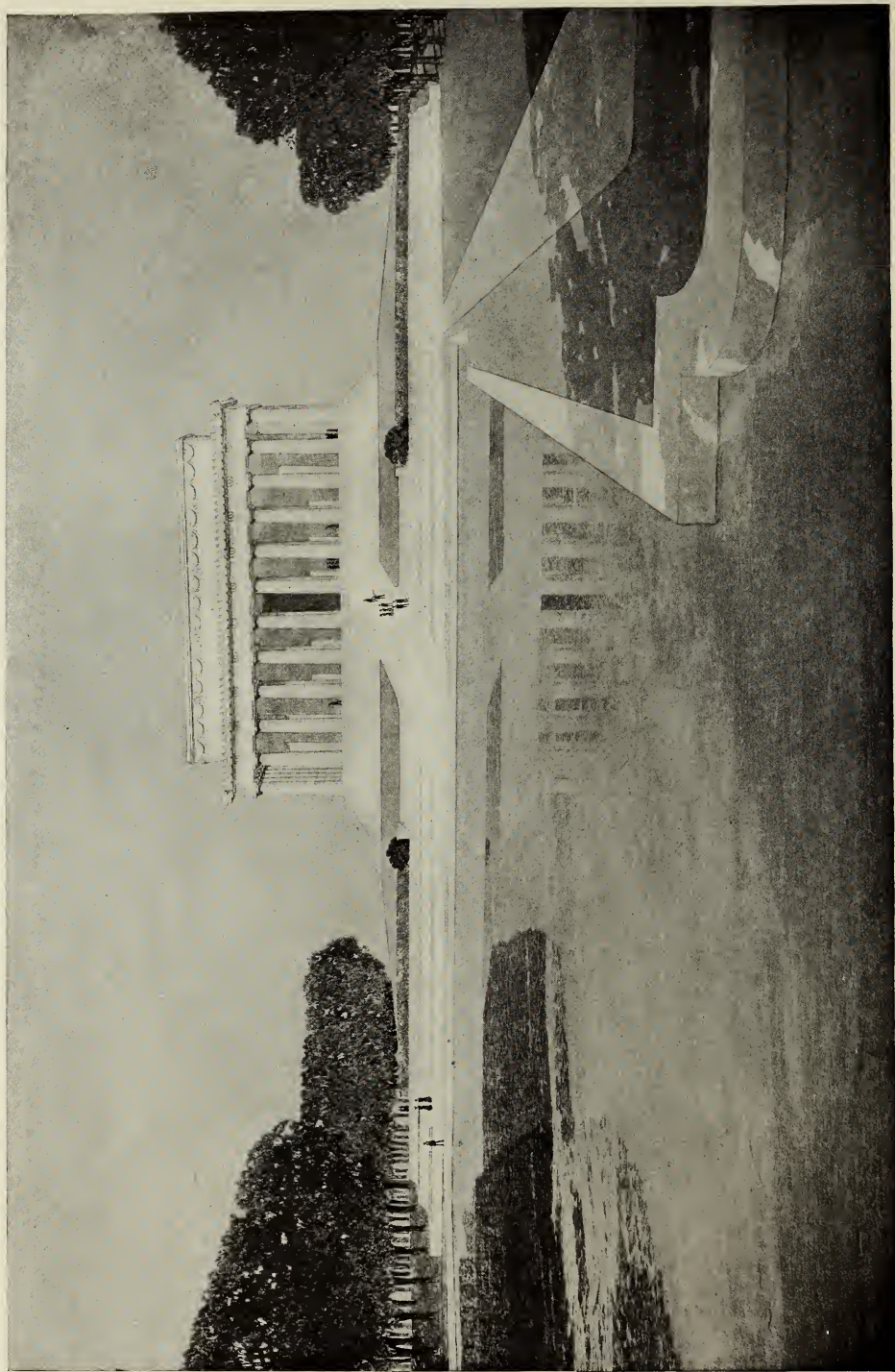
Monument-building is hazardous work, for it is neither for to-day nor for tomorrow, but for all time. Blunders made in stone and bronze are almost ineradicable, and in defiance of the stern hand of time stand as mute witnesses of the folly or stupidity of their builders. We have not always been happy in our choice of memorials. Mr. Hamilton W. Mabie once said, referring to the memorials to our military heroes in Washington, it was to be hoped that future generations would realize that they were erected through ignorance, and not in malice. But we are learning, in fact, might almost be said to have learned. In selecting the site as well as the design for the proposed Lincoln Memorial, Congress, through a specially appointed commission, has sought the best of expert advice.

Ten years ago, when the Park Commission, composed of Daniel H. Burnham,

Charles F. McKim, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., reported to a special committee of the United States Senate a plan for the improvement and development of the park system of Washington, a site was designated for a memorial to Lincoln, the erection of which in the near future was then taken as a matter of course. This site was near the shore of the Potomac River, in what is now known as Potomac Park, on the axis of the Capitol and the Washington Monument, and near the approach to the proposed memorial bridge directly connecting the City of Washington with Arlington. This choice has found favor with experts of the highest standing all over the world. By the American Institute of Architects and its several chapters, the American Federation of Arts, and other leading art societies, and by persons peculiarly qualified to judge, it has been enthusiastically indorsed.

Among those who specially favored this location was the late John Hay, one of Lincoln's secretaries and biographers, whose taste and culture, as well as statesmanship, are no less well known than esteemed. Referring to the plan of the Park Commission, he said:

As I understand it, the place of honor is on the main axis of the plan. Lincoln of all Americans next to Washington deserves this place of honor. He was of the immortals. You must not approach too close to the immortals. His monument should stand

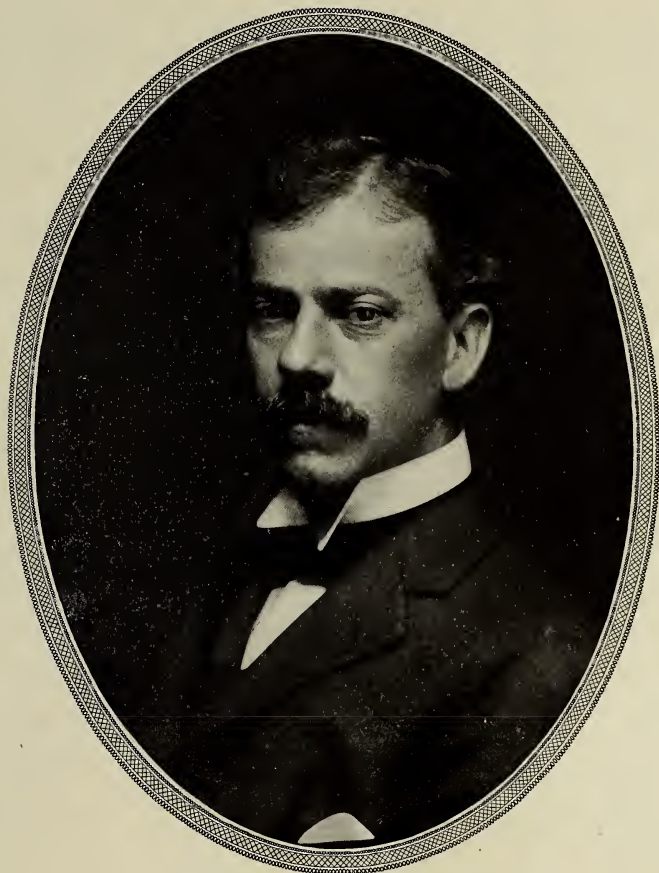


PERSPECTIVE VIEW, FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT, OF THE EASTERN FRONT
OF THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL, SHOWING THE LAGOON IN THE FOREGROUND

alone, remote from the common habitations of man, apart from the business and turmoil of the city; isolated, distinguished, and serene. Of all the sites, this, near the Potomac, is most suited to the purpose.

This judgment was confirmed by the Fine Arts Council appointed by President

Money, and George Peabody Wetmore, and Representatives Joseph G. Cannon, Champ Clark, and Samuel W. McCall) applied to this Commission of Fine Arts, for suggestions as to the location, plan, and design for the proposed memorial, specifically requesting consideration of two sites which at various times had been



HENRY BACON, ARCHITECT

Roosevelt, which was a body made up of thirty artists,—architects, sculptors, painters, and landscape-gardeners,—and again more recently by the Commission of Fine Arts composed of D. H. Burnham, F. D. Millet, Thomas Hastings, Daniel C. French, Charles Moore, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., which was appointed by President Taft under the authority of an act of Congress of May 17, 1910.

March 4, 1911, the Lincoln Memorial Commission (composed of President Taft, Senators Shelby M. Cullom, H. D.

recommended, and also as to the best method of selecting the artists, sculptors, and architects to make the designs and execute them. To have done this was certainly a long step in the right direction.

The Commission of Fine Arts represents the best expert advice which could be obtained upon such a matter. It is made up of men who have won the highest distinction in their several professions as architects, sculptors, and city-planners, and who, through loyalty to the nation and devotion to the interest of art, give their

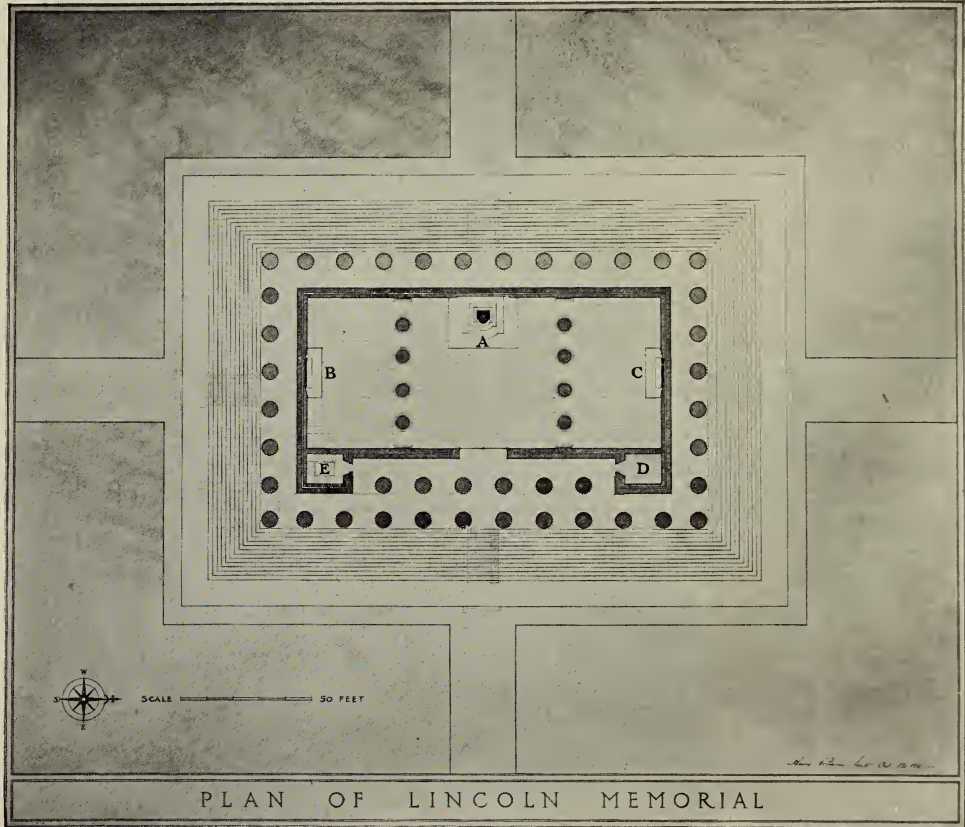


DETAIL OF THE SOUTHEASTERN CORNER OF THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

services gratuitously. This commission met in Washington repeatedly in the spring and early summer, and, after an exhaustive study of the question, reported, July 17, unanimously in favor of the Potomac Park site, strongly recommending its selection. The reasons for so doing were clearly stated and are convincing. The necessity of placing a memorial of so great

effect of the memorial. The fact that there are now no features of interest or importance, that everything is yet to be done, means that no embarrassing obstacles would interfere with the development of a setting adequate in extent and perfect in design, without compromise and without discord.

"... Upon no other possible site in



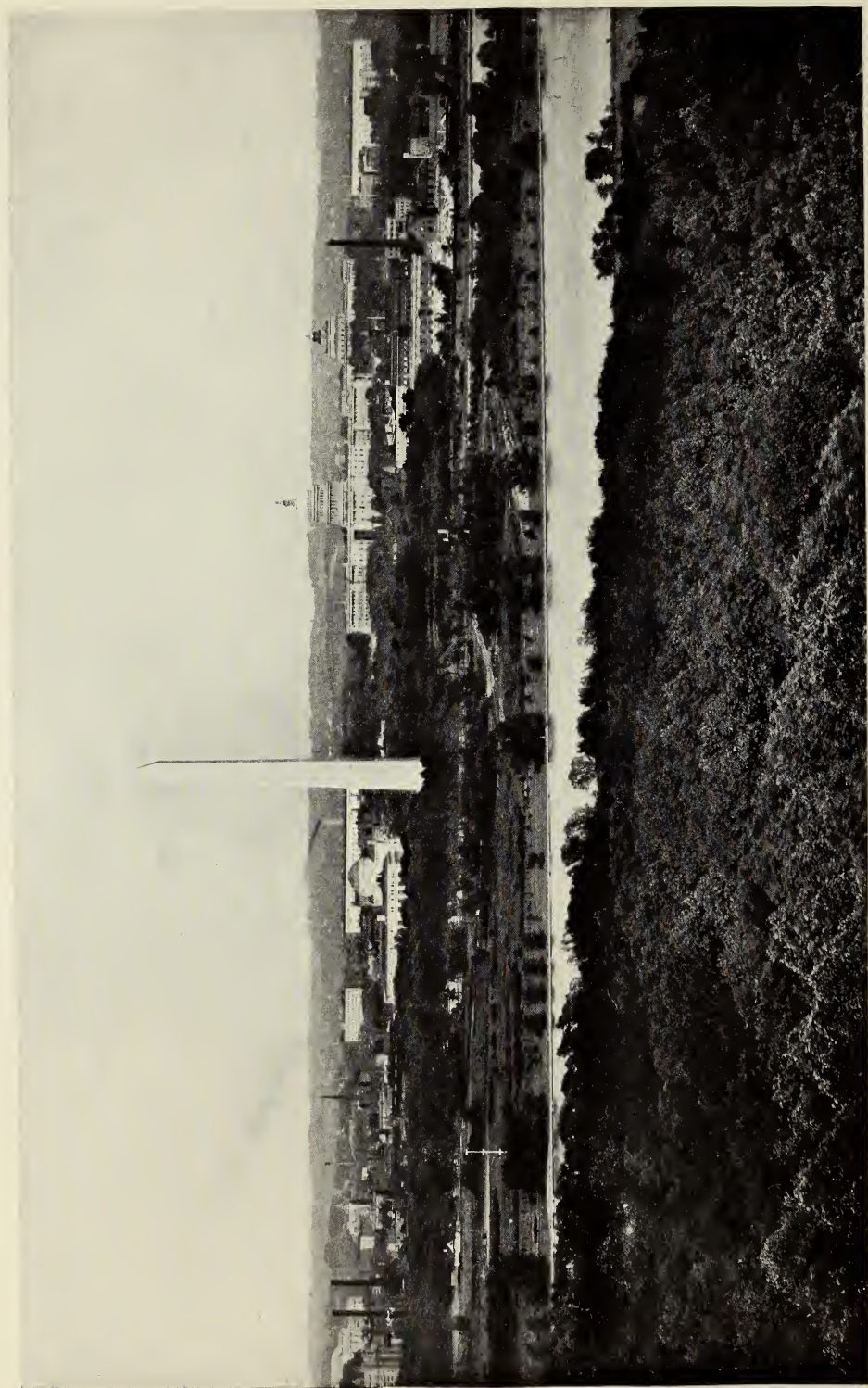
A. Statue of Lincoln; B. Memorial of Gettysburg Address; C. Memorial of Second Inaugural Address; D. Attendant's Room; E. Attendant's Stairs.

a size and importance where its environment could be specially designed to harmonize with it, and where the design need not be controlled or influenced by existing surroundings, was first called to attention, and the advantage of the comparative isolation of the Potomac Park site, which is in the midst of a large area of undeveloped vacant land owned by the Government, was emphasized. The report reads in part:

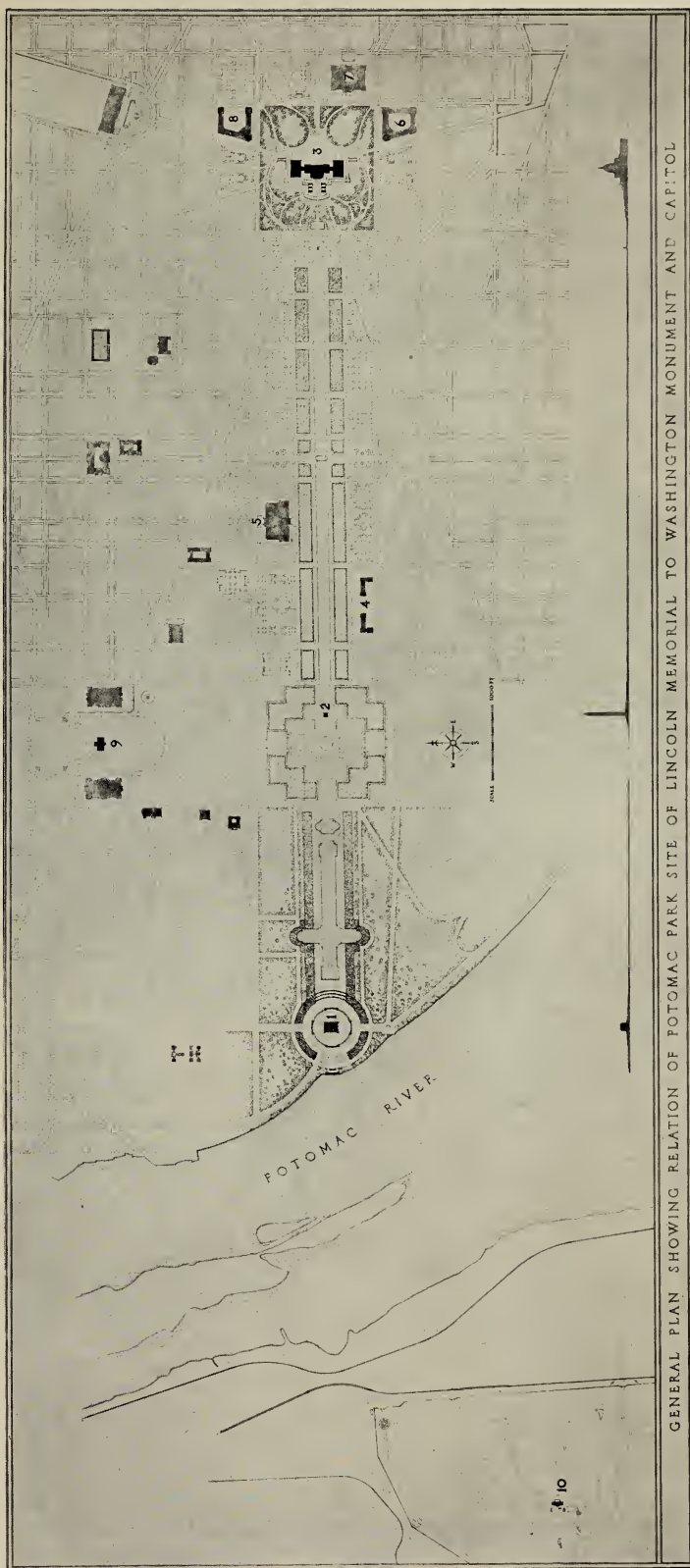
"For a long distance in every direction the surroundings are absolutely free for such treatment as would best enhance the

the City of Washington can this end be secured so completely as upon the Potomac Park site."

Among the further advantages of this site set forth by the Commission of Fine Arts as of determining weight in the matter of selection were not only the possibility of adequate development through the ordinary operations of park improvement, but that while sufficiently isolated to insure dignity of aspect, it is situated in a park destined to become a great popular resort of the people, and that in relation to the general plan of the city as a whole



VIEW OF THE PROPOSED SITE OF THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL (INDICATED AT THE LEFT BY A WHITE,
CROSSED LINE) AS SEEN FROM FORT MEYER, ON THE VIRGINIA SIDE



1. Lincoln Memorial; 2. Washington Monument; 3. Capitol; 4. Agricultural Building; 5. National Museum; 6. House Office Building;
7. Congressional Library; 8. Senate Office Building; 9. White House; 10. Lee Mansion.

it has an importance comparable only with that now occupied by the Washington Monument.

At the time this report was rendered, some suggestions were made with reference to the general character of the proposed memorial and the direct selection of a designer, who, when appointed, would make and submit tentative plans which could later be adequately and fully developed. These suggestions were heartily recommended.

The Lincoln Memorial Commission, following this recommendation, almost immediately appointed Mr. Henry Bacon of New York, whose name was placed in nomination by the Commission of Fine Arts, to design a memorial appropriate to the Potomac Park site, the drawings or model of which might be presented to Congress with their report during the present session. This was not only a great and well-deserved honor, but an exceptional opportunity, and Mr. Bacon accepted

the appointment gladly, laid aside all other work, and for several months gave his whole time and thought to the making of this design. He visited Washington repeatedly, familiarized himself with the proposed location and its surroundings, and then gradually evolved his plans.

Originally the thought presented was of an open portico in conjunction with a statue of Lincoln, but this, upon reflection, Mr. Bacon discarded. That which has been venerated by the people has always been set apart and inclosed. The Greeks placed the statues of their gods in their temples, not out of doors; for it is in comparative seclusion that contemplation is induced, and to receive the message of the immortals it is necessary in a measure to disassociate oneself from the bustle and business of the world. So in his design Mr. Bacon places the statue of Lincoln at the rear of a great rectangular hall, lighted from above, and almost, if not entirely, unadorned. The walls will be of marble, and on those at opposite ends will be inscribed Lincoln's Gettysburg Speech and his Second Inaugural.

In order, however, that even these profound utterances of the great statesman may not be confused with his personality, but pondered in seeming seclusion, screens of four Ionic columns will be placed across the hall at equal distance from each end and as far apart as are the opposite walls. The visitor, entering through the great doorway, the only approach, will find himself directly facing the portrait statue, which through subtle interpretation of personality must dominate the hall, and later may pass to the right or left beyond the stately columns to read and consider the words of this inspired man who "though dead, yet speaketh."

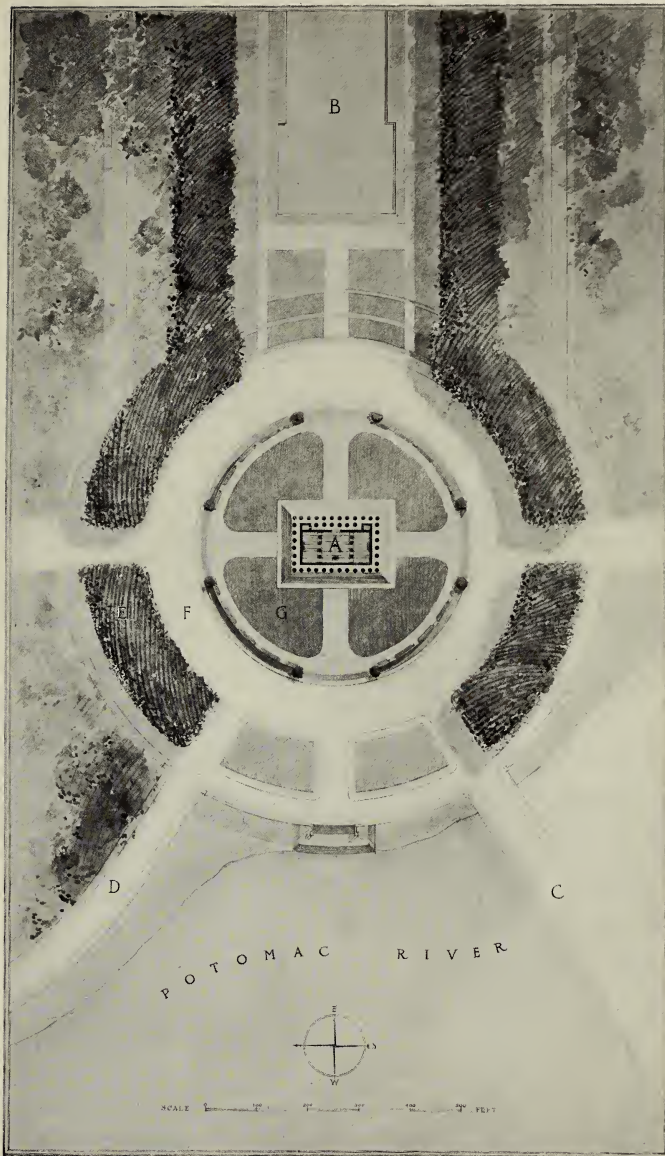
The exterior of the memorial, as will be seen by the accompanying illustrations, will resemble to a degree a Greek temple, the rectangular, windowless building being surrounded by a colonnade composed of thirty-six Doric columns forty feet high and seven feet in diameter at the base. The material will be of white marble. This colonnade, with the building it incloses, will stand on a stylobate composed of thirteen plinths. These will typify the thirteen original States; the thirty-six columns will represent the States in the

Union in Lincoln's time—the Union which he preserved. On the frieze over each column will be carved in high relief wreaths made of pine and laurel, and to the right of each of these will be cut the name of a State; while on the attic, the extension of the cella appearing above the cornice, will be carved garlands or festoons of immortelles and wheat, representing the States in the Union at the time the memorial is erected, which, presumably, will be forty-eight.

Thus the building will typify the Union, the great idea which was conceived by the builders of the Republic, and which Lincoln helped to preserve and perpetuate—an idea which survives. In no better way could Lincoln be memorialized.

Furthermore, the appearance of the building will in itself commemorate the character of Lincoln in the same manner as the great, white shaft, which, about a mile away, rises over five hundred feet into the air, recalls continually to the people the character of Washington, impressive in its grand simplicity. Lincoln's nature was more complex. He was a man less at one with himself, and lacked that assurance which comes from a long heritage of culture; but he was no less brave, serene, and immovable—a man of the people, one who belonged not to a single age, but to all ages. All this is typified in the memorial which Mr. Bacon has designed. It will present an appearance of grandeur and beauty, but at the same time will suggest force and solidity. It is so simple in its design as to seem almost obvious, and yet so perfectly fitting that when it is erected it should seem to have been long extant, to belong not merely to the present and the future, but to the past, to have been the one and only solution.

It is a memorial that Mr. Bacon has designed, not a tomb or a museum. To the casual observer, to those who pass by, it will have significance, and to those who approach and pause it will convey an intimate message. Lincoln relics may well be relegated to the National and Historical museums: a man's deeds are of greater moment than his clothes. Tears, too, may be reserved for another spot, his burial-place; for this is not a memorial to a hero who is dead, but to one who lives in the heart of his nation. We weep not for Lincoln, but reach up to claim the heri-



PLAN SHOWING TREATMENT OF THE SITE OF
THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

A. Lincoln Memorial; B. Lagoon; C. Suggested location of future memorial bridge to Arlington cemetery; D. Driveway along Potomac; E. Four rows of trees on circle 1000 feet in diameter, raised 11 feet above present grade; F. Roadway 100 feet wide; G. Circular terrace 500 feet in diameter, raised 27 feet above present grade.

The level of the grade at the base of the Lincoln Memorial will be the same as that at the base of the Washington Monument.

the event of the acceptance of this design it will, in all probability, be much altered and improved before the structure is completed. In fact, as it now appears, it is little more than a suggestion put in visual form. To perfect such a work, many months of study will be required; for though the general lines are determined, there is much detail which will have to be thought out and designed with the utmost care. To maintain on a large scale an appearance of refined simplicity is of all tasks the most difficult. This Mr. Bacon can be counted upon to do. His work is not superficially clever, but invariably refined and thoughtful, well considered and mature.

Henry Bacon was born at Watseka, Illinois, November 28, 1866. His parents were New Englanders, his father a civil engineer. In 1884, Mr. Bacon entered the University of Illinois, but remained there only one year. Then he entered the office of Chamberlin & Whidden, architects of Boston, and three years later that of McKim, Mead & White, in New York. In 1889 he won the Rotch Traveling Scholarship, which enabled him to

tage he has left. To be found acceptable, a memorial to such a man must engender not only reverence, but aspiration.

This it would seem this memorial will do, though it must be remembered that a work of this magnitude cannot be completed in six months or a year, and that in

spend two years abroad, during which time he made a special study of buildings in Italy and Greece. In 1897 he formed a partnership with Mr. James Brite, which continued until 1903, since which time he has practised alone. He has designed the architectural setting for more than sixty

monuments, working with Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Daniel C. French, Charles H. Niehaus, Karl Bitter, and other distinguished sculptors. He has also designed a number of public or semi-public buildings, such as the Public Library at Paterson, New Jersey, the Waterbury General Hospital at Waterbury, Connecticut, and the railway station at Naugatuck, in the same State.

It was not altogether because of his past achievements, however, that he was selected to design the Lincoln Memorial for the Potomac Park site, but on account of a deep conviction of his capability on the part of the members of his own profession who knew him best. That he would produce a design that would be dignified, appropriate, and beautiful all felt assured. That he has justified this faith is now evident.

Mr. Bacon's design has the first and greatest essential for a memorial to Lincoln, inasmuch as it memorializes his character and his achievement; it also has, however, the virtue of conformity with its surroundings, of being considered as a unit in the composition of the City of Washington, the capital of the Nation. This memorial will terminate the principal axis of the city, it will harmonize with the Capitol, and in no wise conflict with, or be dwarfed by, the Washington Monument.

The style of architecture will agree with that of the best type of public buildings. It is purposed to make the stylobate at its base 231 feet long by 168 feet wide, to make the colonnade 171 feet by 108 feet, and to make the cella 143 feet by 80 feet in dimensions. The ceiling will be 60 feet above the floor, the Ionic columns 50 feet in height. Thus, while not conveying the impression of extraordinary size, the building will have sufficient bulk to assure balance and importance. It will, furthermore, be placed on an eminence many feet above the level of the river and driveways, and be given suitable landscape setting.

The first preparation of the site, according to Mr. Bacon's plans, provides for a circular terrace 1000 feet in diameter, which shall be raised eleven feet above the present grade. On the outer edge of this terrace will be placed four concentric rows of trees, leaving in the center a plateau 750 feet in diameter, or four feet longer than the greatest length of the Capitol. A circular terrace is to be raised in the center of this plateau sixteen feet high and 500 feet in diameter, the diameter being the same as the height of the Washington Monument without its apex. On this eminence, which will be at the same level as the base of the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial will stand.

Mr. Bacon's design is not the only one which will be presented to Congress or will be considered by the Lincoln Memorial Commission, but it is the only one for a memorial to be erected on the Potomac Park site, which, as has been seen, has been unanimously pronounced by experts the best and most suitable location in the City of Washington. That this site and design will not be accepted is beyond belief. When expert advice has been deliberately sought and secured, it is reasonable to conclude that it will be followed.

In the comparatively near future, therefore, there will probably be erected at Washington, near the shore of the Potomac River, in a picturesque park much frequented by the people, a building imposing in appearance, beautiful in design, which will not only fittingly memorialize a national hero, but will testify to our children and our children's children, and to those who come after them, that we ourselves were not without wisdom and culture, reverence and aspiration, that the Union of the States is a monumental conception of abiding significance, and that men like Lincoln do not live in vain. Such a memorial will be worthy of the nation to which Lincoln belonged.

